

Dear Mr. Rice:

Thank you for your presentation before the Mississippi River Commission during the public meeting in Helena, Arkansas, on April 3, 2001. In your statement you expressed concerns for the unmet needs in the St. Francis Basin and discussed completed and initiated works. You also stated concerns with the status of the funding outlook for the Mississippi River and Tributaries and St. Francis Basin projects.

The Commission agrees with your statements regarding the Pecan Point and West Memphis levee slope restoration projects. We are pleased that the Pecan Point levee is nearing completion and that the West Memphis levee project is under contract and will be performed this year. The Memphis District will investigate your concerns about the levee section downstream of the Huxtable Pumping Plant and will contact you about this matter in the near future.

The Commission appreciates your update on the Turkey Roost slough scour repair contract. You suggested that corrections that are needed to reach project objectives on completed improvements should be considered and funded under St. Francis construction rather than the maintenance program. You indicated scour and headcutting on lateral drains such as Turkey Roost slough is just one type of correction that is needed before completion of the project. The Memphis District will consider and make recommendations on a strategy for addressing these concerns.

The Memphis District is working to advertise construction on the relief wells and collector ditches for Blue Lake this summer. Advertising the relief well construction contract is contingent upon the provision of the right-of-way from your

levee district. The design of the outlet ditches continues in coordination with your district. The Memphis District is currently working coordination issues for the necessary relocations and right-of-way to complete the outlet ditch phase of the project.

The Pecan Point Seepage Study along the 6-mile reach of frontline levee south of Wilson, Arkansas, is progressing as exploratory borings are currently being drilled. As you noted in your statement, this study should be completed in the summer of 2002. The award of the construction is scheduled for the summer of 2004.

The Memphis District is currently conducting hydrology and hydraulic investigations on the Ten- and Fifteen-Mile Bayou project to determine the needed improvements to provide the authorized flood control for the area. The engineering and environmental investigations are scheduled for completion by the end of this fiscal year. Right-of-way acquisition and construction of the first item of work could be initiated in Fiscal Year 2002, provided funds are available.

Gravel overlays along the sections you mentioned, between Blytheville and Osceola and between Highway 79 and the Huxtable Pumping Plant, are needed. Unfortunately, budget constraints have delayed this work. The Memphis District has the capability to place gravel on levee roads with little notice or planning when funds are provided.

The Memphis District continues to monitor the performance of the rock baffles and pavement placed in overbank scour holes at Barfield Bend. This monitoring will continue to evaluate the performance of the feature in preventing any additional overbank scour. A survey of the county road has been obtained, and the District plans to look at the feasibility of road alternatives to further reduce scour. We look forward to the continued coordination with your levee district with regard to the establishment of a tree screen along the top bank of the levee.

Memphis District is continuing to investigate the performance of the completed flood control improvements in the

vicinity of Lower Belle Fountain and Stateline outlet ditches in southeast Missouri and northeast Arkansas. These investigations also include the effects of the Rivervale Floodway on drainage conditions in the area. The District will keep you advised of the findings of these investigations.

The Commission appreciates your providing statements and meeting with members of Congress to share your perspective on the problems and needs of the valley. We are better served as a region and indeed as a nation when citizens and local organizations make their voices heard by elected officials in Washington.

In regard to the budget request of the new administration, the Commission must operate within the limitations that are provided. This constraint forces the public stakeholders, the Commission, and the Corps of Engineers to make every effort to properly identify the priorities. It is every stakeholder's goal to serve and protect the local residences, the local economies, and the local natural resources. The Corps will continue to use the best science and the comments from the public to serve the people of the valley.

Thank you again for your comments before the Commission. We appreciate receiving your views and will be pleased to hear from you at our future public meetings.

Sincerely,

Edwin J. Arnold, Jr.  
Brigadier General, U.S. Army  
President Designee, Mississippi  
River Commission